



NEWS

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 10, 2007

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Interior Secretary Kempthorne Announces \$3 Million in Immediate Funding for Healthy Lands Initiative

WASHINGTON -- Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today launched the Healthy Lands Initiative in seven Western states, announcing that the Bureau of Land Management is allocating \$3 million for immediate on-the-ground restoration work.

“As a demonstration of our Department’s commitment to this initiative, we are immediately funding partnership projects to improve the health and productivity of public lands in key areas of today’s fast-changing West,” Kempthorne said in a teleconference with reporters. The states to benefit from the immediate funding are Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, Idaho, Colorado, Oregon, and Nevada.

The Healthy Lands Initiative, announced in the President’s fiscal year 2008 budget proposal, addresses a multitude of pressures on the public lands, including increased urban-suburban development and outdoor recreational activity; rising demands for energy; impacts from large-scale wildfires; and the effects of an ongoing weed invasion.

“Demand for public land uses and resources is at an all-time high,” Kempthorne said, “and the BLM faces tough challenges in carrying out its multiple-use mission. The bureau’s efforts are crucial not only in maintaining the quality of life Westerners have come to expect, but also in ensuring the economic well-being and energy security of all Americans.”

“The Healthy Lands Initiative takes an aggressive, landscape-level approach to land management, one that will facilitate needed energy development while protecting a myriad of resources on the public lands, including world-class wildlife habitat,” he said.

The \$3 million in immediate funding, which is from BLM’s current 2007 appropriated funds, will be distributed for the following projects that will be completed by September 30 of this year:

New Mexico will receive \$1 million for a 40,000-acre mesquite brush control project that will be completed in May;

Wyoming, \$402,000 for sagebrush prescribed burns, riparian restoration, aspen regeneration, and wildlife water developments;

Utah, \$439,000 for removal of pinyon and juniper trees to enhance sage grouse and mule deer habitat;

Colorado, \$325,000 for removal of pinyon and juniper trees, oak brush, and sagebrush followed by seeding to improve composition of herbaceous vegetation. Riparian restoration will also be completed with this funding;

Idaho, \$380,000 for southern Idaho-Snake River Plains for sage grouse restoration with planting of sage brush seedlings and invasive weed control; and

Tri-State Area: SE Oregon-Northern Nevada-SW Idaho, \$454,000 for shrub-steppe restoration for juniper removal, invasive weed control, and riparian restoration.

These funds are in addition to the \$22 million in Healthy Lands Initiative funding the President requested in his FY08 budget. The FY07 projects are expected to leverage an additional \$3 million of in-kind and monetary contributions from state and private partners and help to restore about 74,000 acres of BLM-managed land.

More information on the goals and strategies of the Healthy Lands Initiative is online at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/newsroom/2007/february/healthy_lands_intiative.html

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